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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Monday, December 25, 1944

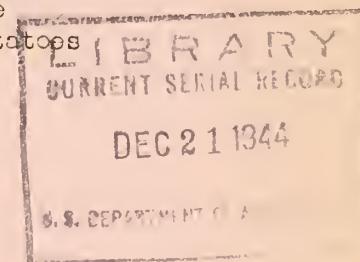
Subject: "Our Soldiers' Christmas Dinner" Information from distribution officials, of the War Food Administration

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Many a family this year will sit around their Christmas dinner table and wish for a magic mirror. Some one will say "I wonder what John is having for his Christmas dinner today" over in France - or Italy - or on an island in the Pacific ocean.

If you want to be the one who puts the magic into the mirror for the rest of the family, get a paper and pencil, for I'm going to give you the menu - the Master Menu for Christmas Day which is sent to every cook in the Army - wherever our soldiers are stationed. It's a long one. Are you ready? Here it is:

Roast Turkey	Sage Dressing	
Giblet Gravy	Cranberry Sauce	
Snowflake Potatoes	Candied Sweet Potatoes	
Green Peas	Asparagus	
Fresh Fruit Salad with Mayonnaise		
Celery	Pickles	Olives
Hot Rolls	Butter	
Hot Mincemeat Pie		Ice Cream
Coffee		
Candy	Fruit	Nuts



Does that make your mouth water? Surely no one could want a finer feast than that on Christmas Day. Of course, you understand - that menu is the MASTER menu, planned at Washington in the Quartermaster General's office - planned months ago, probably last summer. The men and women who make the menus can only estimate the kinds and amounts of food which will be available and the circumstances under which the food can be prepared. Supplies and climate are bound to influence the cook's final menu. But the menu I gave you is the general pattern to be followed as closely as possible.

Food supplies in Iceland are necessarily different from those in the torrid zone of the Pacific and certainly the cooks in the front lines of Europe won't

have the same quantity of fresh fruits and vegetables that the training camps in this country will have. Some of the men on combat duty Thanksgiving Day ate their turkey dinners at breakfast time before they went into action. Judging from the Army cooks' reports they followed the Master menu very close on Thanksgiving. And likely the same will be true on Christmas Day.

Some of the food had already been bought and was waiting in storehouses when the menus were made, but much of it - such as turkeys and fresh fruit - had to be bought since then. The War Food Administration's Food Order on turkeys, for example, gave the armed forces first choice of the turkey flocks. So, thousands of pounds were bought and frozen - then sent to many parts of the world wherever trains, ships and planes could carry refrigerated food. Troops as far away as the China-India - Burma area may not have roast turkey because ships that make such long trips dare not waste an inch of space - so they may have carried canned turkey instead of the bulky frozen birds. But on the whole, the Army has made every effort possible to get these "extras" to its fighting men - the "extras" that have become a part of our traditional American Christmas dinner.

Let's glance through the menu to see what other alterations may be made. When it comes to the sage dressing probably every cook will be there with the goods - the best dressing he can make. One of the first lessons a cook learns is how to make bread. Wherever a cook can build a fire - in a foxhole or a kitchen on wheels - he bakes bread. So it's pretty certain that almost every service man will have dressing for his Christmas dinner. And wherever a turkey is roasted, gravy is sure to follow.

Cranberry sauce, too, is almost a sure thing. Although the cranberry crop was not its best this year - enough cranberries were bought for the Army's big holiday meals. Some camps will get fresh cranberries, but most of the cranberry jelly will be made from dehydrated cranberries, one of the finest of the dried products.

In some areas snowflake potatoes, too, may be made from dehydrated potatoes

But the men who eat them probably won't know nor care, because dried potatoes make delicious fluffy, mashed potatoes. Most camps except those here at home will use canned sweet potatoes. When they're taken from the can, well seasoned, and slowly heated they will probably taste "just like Mom's.

The canned vegetables - asparagus and peas - selected for Christmas dinner, will most likely be the same every place, but the fruit salad may vary considerably. In the original menu the salad calls for apples, oranges, tangerines and grapefruit. But many Army cooks may find it necessary or more convenient to use canned fruit instead of fresh fruit. And because a certain amount of canned fruit was set aside for military purchase, the Army cooks will have the canned fruit they need.

Pickles and olives are pretty certain to be on most Army tables Christmas Day. Celery may and may not - depending on the camp's location. Hot rolls, as I said before, are almost a sure bet. Men returning from the front agree that the smell and taste of fresh bread in the midst of battle seems to act as a stabilizing influence as well as a nourishing body builder. Butter is another important food which will be served in almost all Army Christmas dinners. So if you haven't been able to get as much butter as you would like, it's a satisfaction to know that the War Food Administration butter set-aside put butter on the Army Christmas menu. Even in the tropics butter can be served now because scientists have discovered a method of making and treating butter so it won't melt at the usual temperature.

When it comes to the dessert course the Army cooks do themselves proud. After eating all the main course it doesn't seem possible that anybody could eat dessert. But the G I Joes have superman appetites they say. On ordinary days they get about 4000 calories a day. On Christmas nobody cares to count calories. But the hot mincemeat pie served with coffee will count for more than calories. It will carry warm greetings from the folks back home - a truly All-American finale for a wonderful Christmas dinner, topped off by ice cream, nuts, candy and fruit.

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